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SUBJECT: FOOD SECURITY UPDATE FOR TAJIKISTAN

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¶1. The food security situation in Tajikistan has been slightly better through the first ten months of 2009 compared to 2008, according to World Food Program's December update. Surveys showed that as of October 2009, 22% of households were moderately food insecure and 9% were severely food insecure. Weather and trends in remittances had the biggest impacts on changes in food security. Sughd and Khatlon provinces are the most food insecure.

¶2. Improved harvests due to good rainfall and disaster assistance to areas that experienced spring floods helped keep the food security situation stable. Both wheat and potato harvests were better than average. As a result, the price of wheat fell somewhat, which helped improve household budgets. Lack of access to water is the most common issue associated with food insecurity.

¶3. Despite good harvests, however, food security did not improve much over last year's levels because the fall in remittances and increased domestic unemployment reduced incomes (reflets). The outlook going forward matches this pattern, with households that have access to land and owning livestock relatively well prepared for winter, while households dependant on remittances are more poorly prepared than in the past. Overall, however, 90% of households had some winter stocks as opposed to 80% at the same time in 2008, and fewer households reported reducing food consumption.

¶4. Households that faced negative events that reduced food security are showing a more difficult time recovering this year than last year, mostly as a result of reduced remittances. The survey showed that while the number of returned migrants was unusually high last winter, virtually all again went to Russia in the spring and there is nothing in the data to show a reduction in the level of migration to Russia. Resumed activity in the Russian construction sector could alleviate some of the stress on remittance-dependent households come spring.

¶5. To address the underlying causes of food security the report recommends increasing the availability of and access to food, improving access to water and water quality, reducing disaster risk, creating employment opportunities, and empowering women.

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